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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 EB-07 TRSE-00 AID-05

ACDA-05 IGA-02 MC-02 SCCT-01 /104 W
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R 200905Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 272
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, IS, US, XF
SUBJECT: RABIN (AND THE MEDIA) PLAY DOWN THE JORDANIAN OPTION

REFS: (A) STATE 27375, (B) TEL AVIV 0938, (C) TEL AVIV 0962

BEGIN SUMMARY: RABIN'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS SINCE RETURNING TO ISRAEL AS WELL AS PRESS COMMENTARIES ON HIS BRIEFING TO THE CABINET INDICATE THAT HE BELIEVES NEXT GOI NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVE OUGHT TO BE THE EFFORT TO ATTAIN OVERALL AGREEMENTS WITH ARAB STATES OR POSSIBILITY OF TRADING MORE LIMITED WITHDRAWALS FOR NON-BILLIGERENCY DECLARATIONS FROM EGYPT AND SYRIA. HIS PRESENTATIONS HAVE PLAYED DOWN THE JORDANIAN OPTION. MODERATE CAMP, HOWEVER, IS STILL PRESSING FOR EARLY DEBATE ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE WHICH COULD INVOLVE CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE JORDANIAN-ISRAELI
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NEGOTIATIONS. END SUMMARY

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1. PRIME MINISTER RABIN, SPEAKING TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT HADERA FEBRUARY 18, SAID THAT GOI'S NEXT OBJECTIVE IS A POLITICAL STEP MORE FAR-REACHING THAN THAT ATTAINED IN SINAI II, EITHER ACHIEVEMENT OF AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT ("TRUE PEACE") OR AT LEAST AN END OF THE STATE OF WAR UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS. RABIN ADDED THAT INTERIM AGREEMENTS ARE NOT POSSIBLE IN OTHER AREAS AND THAT, ON BASIS OF HIS WASHINGTON CONSULTATIONS, HE WAS PLEASED TO NOTE THAT USG AGREES WITH THIS ASSESSMENT. NEVERTHELESS, RABIN REPEATED HIS POSITION THAT THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM CAN BE SOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JORDAN, AND THAT THE JORDANIAN DELEGATION CAN INCLUDE PALESTINIAN LEADERS. HE AGAIN CATEGORICALLY REJECTED DEALINGS WITH "TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS" UNDER ANY CONDITIONS.

2. THESE STATEMENTS WOULD CONFIRM THRUST OF RABIN'S PRESENTATION TO ISRAELI CABINET ON FEBRUARY 8, AFTER HIS RETURN FROM WASHINGTON, IN WHICH HE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT U.S AND ISRAEL HAD NOT DECIDED TO CONCENTRATE ON JORDANIAN OPTION. RABIN REPORTEDLY CHARACTERIZED WASHINGTON DISCUSSIONS OF JORDANIAN/ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS AS "LIMITED." RABIN TOLD CABINET THAT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT FORD AND THE SECRETARY HE HAD INDICATED THAT HE WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO PROPOSE AMERICAN EXPLORATION OF A JORDANIAN/ISRAELI AGREEMENT FOR ENDING THE STATE OF WAR IN RETURN FOR WEST BANK WITHDRAWALS. INSTEAD, HE BELIEVED THAT ISRAEL AND JORDAN WOULD HAVE TO SEEK AN OVERALL PEACE SETTLEMENT. ACCORDING TO MAARIV (HARIF), THE SECRETARY HAD RESPONDED THAT THE U.S. DID NOT AGREE WITH THIS APPROACH AND BELIEVED IT WAS POSSIBLE TO EXPLORE AN AGREEMENT BASED ON LESS THAN ARAB PEACE (ABSENCE OF WAR) LEAVING ISSUE OF JERUSALEM ASIDE FOR THE TIME BEING.

3. AS REPORTED REF C, RABIN SINCE HIS RETURN HAS ALSO INDICATED READINESS TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT AND SYRIA IN WHICH, IN RETURN FOR NON-BILLIGERENCY DECLARATION, ISRAELI WOULD CONSIDER ADDITIONAL WITHDRAWALS IN SINAI AND MORE THAN "COSMETIC" MOVEMENT ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. HE HAS NOT APPLIED THIS FORMULA, HOWEVER, TO NEGOTIATIONS
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WITH JORDAN.

4. ISRAEL'S WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS HAS ALSO PLAYED DOWN JORDANIAN OPTION AS REALISTIC PROSPECT IN LAST FEW DAYS. JERUSALEM POST (BLITZER) FEBRUARY 17 WRITES THAT: "ISRAELI OFFICIALS HAVE CONCEDED THAT PRESS LEAKS ABOUT POSSIBLE ISRAEL-JORDAN NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN DESIGNED IN PART TO TAKE SOME OF THE HEAT OFF ISRAEL. THESE OFFICIALS BELIEVE SUCH NEGOTIATIONS ARE PRACTICALLY A NON-STARTER,SINCE THE RABIN GOVERNMENT IS UNLIKELY TO MAKE A SWEEPING OFFER

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TO KING HUSSEIN WHICH WOULD CONVINCE HIM TO REJECT THE
RABAT SUMMIT CONFERENCE DECISION. ISRAEL'S ANSER FOR THIS
YEAR HAS BEEN TO EMBARK ON INTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH
WASHING-
TON ON THE DIFFICULTISSUES INVOLVED IN AN OVERALL
SETTLEMENT. A SEMBLANCE OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY COULD THUS
BE MAINTAINED."

5. DEFENSE MIN-
ISTER PERES, RESTATING PUBLICLY HIS LONG-
STANDING OPPOSITION TO WEST BANK WITHDRAWALS, TOLD HEBREW
UNIVERSITY AUDIENCE FEBRUARY 18 THAT ISRAEL ALREADY HAD AN
INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH JORDAN EVEN THOUGH IT WAS NOT WRITTEN,
AND THAT ANY OTHER AGREEMENT BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES WOULD ONLY
BE WORSE FROM THE ISRAELI VIEWPOINT. PERES NOTED THAT
WEST BANK/JORDANIAN SECURITY SITUATION IS UNDER CONTROL, THE
AREA IS RELATIVELY QUIET AND THE BRIDGES ARE OPEN

6. ISRAELI PRESS ALSO NOTES THAT FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON IS
PRESSING FOR LONG-DELAYED CABINET DEBATE ON PALESTINIAN
ISSUE WHICH WOULD ENCOMPASS QUESTION OF POSSIBLE JORDANIAN/
ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE HIS TRIP TO LATIN AMERICA NEXT
WEEK. LABOR PARTY MODERATES AND MAPAM/ILP MINISTERS ARE ALSO PUSHING
FOR EARLY DEBATE AND BELIEVE ISRAEL SHOULD MOVE FORWARD IN EXPLORING
JORDANIAN OPTION EVEN IF THIS INVOLVED GOING TO THE
ELECTORATE AHEAD OF TIME.

7. COMMENT: RABIN CLEARLY HAS TRIED TO SQUELCH THE WIDE-
SPREAD PRESS SPECULATION PRECEDING HIS RETURN FROM WASHINGTON
THAT U.S. AND ISRAEL HAD REACHED FIRM DECISION TO MOVE AHEAD
WITH EXPLORATION OF JORDANIAN OPTION. HIS REMARKS,TOGETHER
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WITH REITERATION OF OPPOSITON BY PERES AND OTHER HARDLINERS
IN THE CABINET TO WEST BANK WITHDRAWAL, HAVE AT LEAST
COOLED DOWN THE INITIAL EXPECTATIONS FROM MODERATE CAMP
THAT SOME MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION MIGHT BE IN THE
OFFING IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ISRAELI DOMESTIC POLITICS
ALSO CLEARLY ARE REFLECTED IN RABIN'S PERFERENCE FOR
OVERALL SETTLEMENTS OR SOME ADDITIONAL STEP WITH SYRIA
AND EGYPT. EVEN BEFORE GOING TO WASHINGTON, HE TRIED TO
DEFER THE DEBATE ON THE PALESTINIAN/JORDANIAN ISSUE TO
AVOID AN INTERNAL CABINET SHOWDON. COMMENTATORS HAVE
ALSO NOTED THAT HIS FORMULAH ON ON NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATIONS
IS QUOTE CLOSE TO THAT OF DAYAN. OUR IMPRESSION IS
THAT RABIN WISHES TO AVOID OPEN CONFRONTATION WITH THE
RAFI/NRP HARDLINERS. LOCAL OBSERVERS AT THIS STAGE SEEM
FRANKY PUZZLED AS TO WHAT COMES NEXT ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI
NEGOTIATING SCENE.
TOON

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